



*THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES*

DIVISION OF HEALTH CARE FINANCE AND POLICY

Two Boylston Street • Boston, MA 02116-4737
(617) 988-3100 • FAX (617) 727-7662 • TTY (617) 988-3175
www.mass.gov/dhcfp

MITT ROMNEY
GOVERNOR

KERRY HEALEY
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

RONALD PRESTON
SECRETARY

PAUL J. COTE, JR.
COMMISSIONER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
August 26, 2004

CONTACT:
Dick Powers
(617) 573-1610
Donna Rheaume
(617) 573-1612

460,000 MASSACHUSETTS RESIDENTS REPORT THEY HAVE NO HEALTH INSURANCE

As Many As 75,000 May Qualify For MassHealth Benefits

Approximately 460,000 Massachusetts residents say they don't have health insurance in a survey released today by the Division of Health Care Finance and Policy (DHCFP). However, up to 75,000 of them may be eligible for state coverage.

Beginning October 1, uninsured residents who access free care through the uncompensated care pool will be required to apply for MassHealth benefits. The federal government reimburses the state for half of those costs.

Results of the survey conducted during the spring and summer show that about 460,000 Massachusetts residents, 7.4 percent, are uninsured, compared to 418,000, or 6.7 percent, two years ago.

"While there are many who expected the uninsured numbers to be much higher, we should take no great solace that they are not, and maintain our efforts to provide health coverage for many of the state's uninsured and underinsured," said Health and Human Services Secretary Ronald Preston.

The Commonwealth's biennial health insurance survey shows that children under the age of 19 have maintained the highest level of coverage among all age groups. The uninsured rate of 3.2 percent is identical to the findings presented two years ago.

"We are pleased to see that the coordinated efforts of programs like the State Children's Health Insurance Program have helped to keep the rate of uninsured children low in Massachusetts," said DHCFP Commissioner Paul J. Cote Jr.

The rate of uninsured non-elderly adults increased from 9.2 percent to 10.6 percent over the past two years, largely because uninsured rates for those between the ages of 19 and 39 rose from

12.1 percent in 2002 to 14.1 percent this year. The growth in the uninsured among those between the ages of 40-64 also increased significantly from 6.6 percent to 7.9 percent.

The Boston, Western and Worcester regions of the state experienced stable numbers of uninsured in 2004 compared with 2002. However, both the Northeast and Southeast regions of the state have more uninsured. In the Northeast region the non-elderly uninsured rate has increased from 6.4 to 9.7 percent. The Southeast region non-elderly uninsured rate has increased from 6.8 to 8.9 percent. Also, fewer non-elderly uninsured adults were working in 2004 than in 2002 (68.3 percent vs. 73.2 percent).

These findings are based on a biennial survey conducted on behalf of DHCFP by the Center for Survey Research at UMass Boston. The Center has surveyed nearly 13,000 individuals and 4,750 Massachusetts households. This survey provides valid and reasonable Massachusetts uninsured estimates, more reliable and current than national survey estimates. The most frequently cited national survey for state level uninsurance estimates is the Current Population Survey (CPS) conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. Major differences between this survey and the state sponsored survey include the following:

- The CPS is a labor market survey, and not designed to measure the rate of health insurance coverage. These questions come three quarters of the way through a long and complex series of questions when respondent fatigue is high. The state sponsored survey was specifically designed to generate valid and reliable health insurance coverage estimates.
- The CPS is based on the previous twelve months of time. The CPS data released today is based on the time period March 2002 through March 2003.
- The CPS is a “residual” estimate for the entire previous year. The CPS did improve on this residual methodology by adding a confirming health insurance coverage question starting in 2000.
- The state survey is a “point-in-time” estimate. Respondents answer the state sponsored survey for their current insurance status (in the field February 2004 through August 2004). Experts do not agree on what timeframe the CPS survey measures (point in time vs. entire year’s insurance status vs. part of the year).
- The CPS estimates insurance status for missing data using a mix of national averages. This disproportionately affects Massachusetts data due to our generous Medicaid program and our higher than average employer offered insurance base. This is a very complex and highly important issue that many believe makes up a large percentage of the discrepancy between CPS and state sponsored survey estimates.

The Massachusetts Division of Health Care Finance and Policy is a state agency under the Office of Health Services in the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. The agency collects, analyzes and disseminates information with the goal of improving the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of the Massachusetts health care delivery system. Further information on this survey is available at www.mass.gov/dhcfp. A full report on the survey will be available in the fall.

#####

Data Update: Massachusetts Survey of Health Insurance Status 2004

Survey results from the 2004 Massachusetts Survey of Health Insurance Status estimate that 460,000 Massachusetts residents of all ages were uninsured in 2004. Children under the age of 19 have maintained the highest level of coverage among all age groups. The uninsured rate of 3.2 percent for children is identical to the findings two years ago. Uninsured rates increased for young adults ages 19 through 39 and for adults ages 40 through 64. More uninsured adults were also unemployed in 2004 than in 2002.

A full report with final data will be available by the end of the year.

Massachusetts Uninsured Estimates by Age Group

	1998	2000	2002	2004
0-18	6.3%	3.0%	3.2%	3.2%
19-64	10.8%	8.0%	9.2%	10.6%*
0-64	9.3%	6.5%	7.4%	8.3%*
All Ages	8.2%	5.9%	6.7%	7.4%*

Population Estimates. Rounded				
	1998	2000	2002	2004
0-18	78,000	49,000	53,000	54,000
19-64	392,000	311,000	355,000	400,000
0-64	470,000	360,000	408,000	454,000
All Ages	475,000	365,000	418,000	460,000

Massachusetts Uninsured Estimates by Region, ages 0 through 64

	1998	2000	2002	2004
Metro Boston	8.1%	5.6%	8.2%	7.8%
Northeast	7.0%	7.0%	6.4%	9.7%*
Southeast	10.9%	8.2%	6.8%	8.9%*
Western	9.5%	5.8%	7.9%	7.8%
Worcester	7.2%	6.6%	6.9%	7.0%

* estimates are statistically significant changes from 2002 survey results.